

RUSH COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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GERMAN GENEALOGY: RESEARCHING ANCESTORS FROM THE U.S. TO GERMANY

Kent Robinson, Past President, Palatines to America — ©2020

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Steps to Success

- Identify the immigrant ancestor
- Discover the name and location of the village in the homeland
- Utilize church records in Germany
- Extend research using additional archives

Identify the immigrant ancestor

- Name, dates of birth, marriage, immigration, children, other family members born in Germany, religion [noting those events occurring prior to immigration]
- FAN (friends, associates, and neighbors) club

Identify the name of the homeland village

- Discovered 90% of the time in U.S. records
- A necessary step since records in Germany are locally based
- Use typical genealogy resources
- Specific recommended resources
 - German church records in the U.S.
 - FamilySearch
 - Ancestry.com
 - GIACR (*Germans in American Church Records* by Roger Minert)
 - Local archives
 - German language newspapers in the U.S.
 - Chronicling America website <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>
 - Hoosier State Chronicles website <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/>
 - Indiana Tribune
 - State and local libraries & historical societies
 - Online newspaper archives
 - Citizenship records—Declaration of Intent and final papers
- Specific recommended resources in Germany
 - Compgen.de — GEDBAS <http://gedbas.genealogy.net/>
 - Hamburg Passenger Lists
 - German state archive website —emigration database [if German state of origin is known]
 - Geogen surname mapping <https://legacy.stoepel.net/en>

History & Geography

- 800-1806: Holy Roman Empire
- 1524: Protestant Church records begin
- 1545-1563: Catholic Church records begin
- 1555: Peace of Augsburg—*cuius regio, eius religio*
- 1648: Peace of Westphalia—Catholics & Protestants equal; recognized Calvinism
- 1772-1795: Three partitions of Poland
- 1789-1813: Napoleon occupies increasing portions of “Germany”
- 1806: Holy Roman Empire ends
- 1850: Hamburg passenger lists begin
- 1871: Germany becomes a nation
- 1876: Civil registration throughout Germany
- No national records—locally based
- Follow jurisdictions throughout history
- Changing borders mean the location may not be in Germany today
- Areas that can be confusing
 - Bavaria
 - Alsace Lorraine
 - Hesse
 - Prussia
 - Saxony

Locating the Village in the homeland

- Must use a gazetteer and map
 - Meyers Orts.... www.meyersgaz.org
 - Kartenmeister <http://kartenmeister.com/>

Starting Research in Germany (using Kirchenbücher)

- Determine the religion
- Determine the parish
 - *Map Guide to German Parish Registers* by Kevan Hansen
- Protestant
 - FamilySearch www.familysearch.org
 - Ancestry [\$] www.ancestry.com
 - Archion.de [\$] www.archion.de
 - Regional archive
 - Local parish Google: <village name> “kirche”
- Catholic
 - FamilySearch www.familysearch.org
 - Ancestry [\$] www.ancestry.com
 - Matricula <https://data.matricula-online.eu/en/>
 - Regional diocese
 - Local parish Google: <village name> “kirche”

Additional German Resources

- Civil registration records — all parts of Germany after 1876
- Other record types
- Other archives [*Archiv*]
 - *Dorf* (village); *Stadt* (city); *Gemeinde* (community); *Staat* (state)
 - Genealogy societies Google: “genealogie verein”
 - German websites
 - www.compgen.de

Additional information

- *Rufname* = “call name” — usually the second given name
- Given names for children may be reused, if one dies
- Spelling of surnames is not that important — prior to late 1800s
- May encounter various languages — German, Latin, and French
- Dates are in DD/MM/YYYY format 04.07.1776 4 JUL 1776
- Surnames are often underlined in church books
- Village may not be in Germany today
- Concept of *Stand*

References and Resources

- *Germans to America* by Ira Glazier & William Filby — (74 volumes)
- *Map Guide to German Parish Registers* by Kevan Hansen— 57 volumes
- *German Research Companion* by Shirley Riemer
- *<State> Place Name Index* by Roger Minert— 26 volumes
- *German-English Genealogical Dictionary* by Ernest Thode
- *Germans in American Church Records* by Roger Minert — 28 volumes (includes Indiana)

Websites

- FamilySearch www.familysearch.org
 - Wiki https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Germany_Genealogy
 - Learning Center
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Germany_Online_Classes_and_Tutorials
 - Community https://community.familysearch.org/s/?language=en_US
- Ancestry www.ancestry.com
- Archion www.archion.de
- Matricula <https://data.matricula-online.eu/en/>
- Compgen www.compgen.de

Reading Records

- Learn common German words used in genealogy
- FamilySearch Wiki: German word list
 - https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/German_Genealogical_Word_List
- Looking for names and dates primarily
- Surnames are underlined in most records
- Print a list of your surnames and villages in Kurrent and/or Sütterlin script [1st & 3rd option]
 - <https://www.deutsche-handschrift.de/adsschreiben.php#schriftfeld>
- Practice regularly to increase your own ability
- Post a question on FamilySearch Community
- Hire a professional translator

Websites — translation into English

- Some have a choice of language (German | English)
- Chrome browser
 - Right click: “Translate to English”
- Other browsers
 - Copy URL
 - Paste into Google translate

Researching in Germany

- Contact the Rathaus (city hall) or local genealogy society to inquire about someone who speaks English
- Use a translation app on your smartphone
- Hire a student for a couple of hours or a day
- Learn some simple, key phrases yourself
- Make appointments when visiting *Pfarramt* or archive!

Increasing Your Knowledge

- Join German genealogy societies
- Attend meetings and conferences
- Read articles and blogs
- Learn keywords in German
- Use all resources available at FamilySearch
- Use the same strategies|techniques you would use for U.S. research
- **You can be successful—even without knowing German**

ADDENDUM

Types of Kirchenbücher (church books)

- Baptism: *Taufen*
- Confirmation: *Konfirmation*
- Marriage: *Ehe, Heirat, Trauung*
- Death: *Sterbe, Tote, Begraben*
- Family Registers: *Familienregister* [not available in all areas]

Family History Centers & Affiliate Libraries near Rushville

- Family History Centers
 - Indianapolis on Stop 11 Road
 - Richmond
 - Oxford, OH
- Affiliate Libraries
 - Union County Public Library @ Liberty
 - Shelby County Public Library @ Shelbyville
 - Greensburg-Decatur County Public Library @ Greensburg
 - Franklin County Public Library @ Brookville
 - Indiana State Library @ Indianapolis

Palatines to America: German Genealogy Society www.palam.org
Indiana Chapter, Palatines to America <https://inpalam.org/>
Fall Meeting October 3 with Teresa Steinmkamp McMillin
See chapter website for registration information

KEY ESSENTIALS OF GERMAN GENEALOGY—From Basics to Success **\$30**

- Syllabus of about 100 pages including a 20 page bibliography arranged by category
- Includes text from all PowerPoint slides
 - Determining the village of origin
 - History and Geography
 - *Dies und Das*—This and That
 - Resources—Books and Websites
 - Using Records in the Homeland
- Send E-mail to: neker0@aol.com or indianapalam@gmail.com

Presented as a 4-hour Webinar for Colorado Chapter, Palatines to America on October 17
https://www.palam.org/palam_update/resources/2020copalamfallseminarregistrationformv407072020-1.pdf